



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

March 4, 2026

Message from Pastor EJ



Pastor EJ

Aloha Mānoa Valley Church family,

I want to take a moment to reintroduce myself and my role among you as Pastor of Mission & Community Engagement. It has been a gift to begin getting to know you, worship with you, and listen to the heart of this church. My role is to journey alongside this congregation as we prayerfully discern what mission and outreach look like here, in this place, among these people, at this time.

In my recent sermon from John 7, we reflected on Jesus' words: *Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.* Jesus spoke these words during the Festival of Tabernacles, when the people were remembering God's provision in the wilderness and praying for renewed life. At the very moment when water was being poured out in the temple as a sign of longing and dependence, Jesus stood up and declared himself to be the true source of living water.

Before we think about what it means to serve others, love our neighbors, or bear witness in the valley, we must hear Jesus' words personally...*Let anyone who is thirsty come.* That means mission does not begin with activity. It begins with honesty and recognizing our own need for Christ. Jesus does not shame that thirst. He welcomes it and invites us to come and drink. This must remain central for us as a church. If we are to become a people through whom living water flows, we must first be a people who keep returning to Jesus ourselves. Inreach and outreach belong together.

That is part of why I see my role the way I do. Mission and community engagement are not ultimately about importing a ready-made model or chasing whatever "worked over there at that church." My work is to listen well to God, to this congregation, and to this community and to help us discern together how the Spirit may be leading Mānoa Valley Church to live faithfully in this season. This kind of discernment takes humility. It takes conversation. It takes prayer. It takes learning how to name what we mean by words like *mission, outreach, evangelism, service, justice, and presence.* And it takes trust that the Holy Spirit moves in diverse ways.

Sometimes we are tempted to measure faithfulness only by what is most visible. Numerical growth is one tangible measure, and of course we give thanks when new people come and the church grows. But numbers alone are not the full measure of the Spirit's work. The call of the church is not simply to become bigger; it is to become faithful.



Links

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Taylor (13), Camden (7), wife JL, Natalie (11) and EJ

Faithfulness may look like deepening relationships. It may look like hospitality that makes room for people who are hesitant or hurting. It may look like prayerful presence with neighbors. It may look like volunteering and partnering with other community organizations. It may look like gentleness and patience as we learn about each other's journeys. The Spirit is not limited to one form of fruitfulness, and part of our task is to learn how to recognize and join what God is already doing among us and around us.

For starters, I want to invite you to a series of upcoming mission and outreach conversations, held after service. We'll have three gatherings before Easter and one after, beginning **March 8** (more details to come).

These times are meant to be a shared space where we can learn together, clarify what we mean by key terms, and prayerfully discern how God may be leading Mānoa Valley Church in this season. My hope is that these conversations will encourage and equip us to discover together what it means to be a church through whom the life of Christ flows into the world.

So we begin where Jesus begins: *come and drink*. And as we do, may the Spirit form us into a faithful people, ready to love our neighbors in the particular ways God calls us to, here in Mānoa.

Let's go, fam! With gratitude, EJ Ravago

Moderator's Message by Roger Au



Roger Au

Aloha Friends of Mānoa Valley Church,

There are so many exciting things on the horizon! We are firmly in the Lenten Season. As we prepare for Easter, we reflect on Jesus' time in the desert as we pray and practice acts of charity and sacrifice.

Please save Sunday, March 22nd to participate in our annual Congregational Meeting. This is a great opportunity to learn about the business of the church. The agenda includes an update to our budget, financial reports and news from our pastors. The Trustees will discuss major projects coming this summer – playground equipment replacement and temporary closure of the gym to repaint the roof structure.

All in the 'Ohana

Members of the MVC community may have already noticed **Dr. Susan Nishida**, who joined our church in October, 2025. She has enthusiastically availed herself of numerous opportunities such as making sandwiches for Keauhou Shelter, reading Scripture during Worship, and attending Pastor Alan Maeno's seminar on Women of the Old Testament. She is also a newly-installed member of the Christian Education Committee!

A life-long resident of Mānoa, Susan describes herself in this statement: "I was a registered nurse who later became an internal medicine physician. God has given me the opportunities to help people, and He also helped me carry the strenuous burden of training as an MD. I am married to Dr. Steven Nishida, a general surgeon, and have three grown children. I currently work at UH Student Health Clinic and have been there for 12 years. I truly enjoy the fellowship at Mānoa Valley Church and give my faith to God for all he has given me. I love you all."



Dr. Susan Nishida

Please introduce yourself to Susan at Worship and welcome her to our congregation!

Invitation to Help a Worthy Cause

We will once again be bringing dinners to the parents and children in the Family Promise Program on **Thursdays, March 12 and April 23, 2026**. The Family Promise Program has helped hundreds of families find safe and secure long term housing. We are so grateful for their program and the opportunity to help them make a difference for Hawaii's most vulnerable: our keiki! Thank you to all who have joined us in supporting them.

Your food donation can be a main dish, a salad, some fruit, rice, and/or dessert for five (or more) people. If you feel called to contribute something, please sign up using the link below. Bring your food to the church parking lot between 5-5:10 p.m. on March 12th or April 23 (whichever day you sign up to bring food). Thank you for sharing God's love and blessings! If you have questions, contact **Inga Park Okuna** at ingaparkokuna@gmail.com



Happy volunteers: Ruth Komatsu, Maddie and Milton Oshiro, Susan Shiraki and Carolyn Okinaga.

[3/12/26 SIGN UP LINK](#)

[4/23/26 SIGN UP LINK](#)

An Invitation from MVC's Book Club



If you are interested in reading an autobiography of former First Lady Michelle Obama, get a copy of her bestselling book, *Becoming*, which was published in 2018. It is a candid and readable account of her life, starting with her youth, growing up in South Chicago, through her Ivy League education and introduction to Barack, marriage, motherhood and ultimately life as the First Family. Join the Book Club at its next meeting on **March 29th after Worship** in the Upper Room or on Zoom. Contact **Dianne Ishida** at dianne@hawaii.edu if you are interested.

The Royal Hawaiian Band Will Perform at MVC

The band will perform for our Child Care children on **March 12, 10 am**. All are invited!



Mark your Calendar—Sunday, March 22, After Worship Service



You Are Invited ...



HOLY WEEK SERVICES SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday - Mar. 29, 10 am
 Maundy Thursday - Apr. 2, 7 pm
 (in-person only)
 Good Friday - Apr. 3, 7 pm
 (in-person only)
 Easter Sunday - Apr. 5,
 7am (in-person only)
 and 10 am
 Easter Family Activities
 after 10 am service

Easter Floral Decorations Needed

Please bring cut flowers or potted Easter lily plants to decorate our traditional floral cross and the chancel area. Thank you.



Date	Event
Mar. 8	Mission and Outreach conversations with Pastor EJ, after Worship
Mar. 12	Royal Hawaiian Band Concert, 10–10:45 am, gym, all are invited
Mar. 12	Family Promise dinner donations, 5-5:10 pm.
Mar. 15	Sandwich making for Keauhou Shelter, 9 am., breezeway
Mar. 22	Child Care Committee to provide snacks
Mar. 22	Congregational Meeting, after Worship
Mar. 26	Prince Kuhio Day, Holiday—Office closed
Mar. 29	Book Club meeting, after Worship, Upper Room or on Zoom
Mar. 28	e-Newsletter article deadline